

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

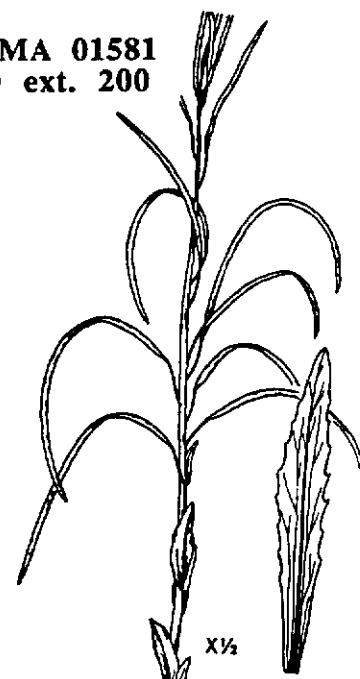
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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Westborough, MA 01581
(508) 792-7270 ext. 200

MASSACHUSETTS THREATENED PLANTS

Green Rock Cress
(*Arabis missouriensis* Green)

Description

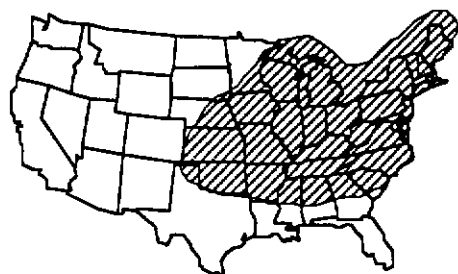
Green Rock Cress, a member of the Mustard family, is a completely hairless (glabrous), green biennial herb with a stem height of 8-20 inches (20-50 cm). The narrow stem leaves are numerous, up to 3 inches (8 cm) in length, and partly overlap. The narrow basal leaves are arranged in a circle (rosette), are .8-3.5 inches (2-9 cm) long, .2-.6 inches (.5-1.5 cm) broad, and are pinnately cut into narrow divisions. Flowers measure .3 inches (.8 cm) long. Each has four creme colored petals which are twice as long as the sepals. Fruits (siliques) are long (2.5-3.5 inches, 6-9 cm), very narrow (less than .1 inch, .2 cm), at first erect but later arching outwards, the tip pointing down. Seeds are conspicuously winged and are arranged in one row. Flowering season is May-mid June, with the fruits appearing after the flowers in June-September.



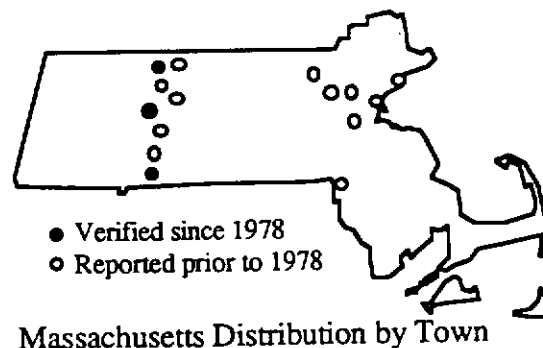
Gleason, H.A. New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada, New York Botanical Garden, 1952

Similar Species

Green Rock Cress resembles the six other species in the genus occurring in Massachusetts. Lyre-leaved Rock-cress (*A. lyrata*) has more or less pinnate basal leaves, but is much shorter and diffuse, with branches at or near the base of the plant. The pods stick out but are not curved. Hairy Rock-cress (*A. hirsuta*), Drummond's Rock-cress (*A. drummondii*), and Tower Mustard (*A. glabra*) all have essentially straight, erect pods that do not arch outwards. Sicklepod (*A. canadense*) has pods that are more or less curved, but are drooping or dangling. Smooth Rock-cress (*A. laevigata*) has curved, arching pods, but its basal leaves are not pinnate and its stem leaves have obvious lobes that clasp around the stem.



▨ Range of Green Rock Cress



Habitat in Massachusetts

Green Rock Cress is usually found on ledges in rocky woods and hills with fairly open to filtered light and mesic-dry soil. Surrounding vegetation may include Red Oak, Hop Hornbeam, Pignut Hickory, Sugar Maple, Wild Columbine, Polypody, Fern, Pale Corydalis, and Pussytoes.

Range

Green Rock Cress is found discontinuously from Maine to New York and Wisconsin south to Pennsylvania, northern Georgia, Indiana, and Oklahoma.

Population Status

Green Rock Cress is considered "Threatened" in Massachusetts. There have been 5 recent (after 1978) verified occurrences and 15 historical (before 1978) occurrences. The plant is also considered rare in Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Maine, Missouri, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont. Many sites appear to be more densely forested now than in the past, due to a reduction (lack) of cutting, grazing, and natural fires. There is concern that populations may be lost due to excessive shading.